

56-1399

16 APR 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Support)

SUBJECT : Official Personnel Folders

REFERENCE : Memo from DD/S to D/Pers dtd 26 Nov 55, DD/S 55-3037,  
Subj: Privacy of the File

1. This memorandum is for your information in reviewing problems and current efforts in exercising control over the content and dissemination of Official Personnel Folders. Your particular attention is invited to paragraph 7.

2. Referenced memorandum, while pointing out that the Medical Staff and Office of Security have devised means for maintaining their respective files as privileged material, recognizes that such control by those offices is for different reasons. We would like to elaborate on this point by noting that these professional units arrive at decisions within their respective spheres and that only their decision needs to be announced or recorded outside of their offices. Personnel decisions, on the other hand, are made at all supervisory levels throughout the Agency. The raw material for formulating such decisions must therefore be made available on a fairly broad base.

3. The personnel file must also contain the information needed by supervisory personnel in arriving at their decisions. This includes not only formal employment records, description of past education and experience, training and performance evaluations, etc., but also memoranda and letters of commendation, reprimand, and the like. In short, every bit of information which contributes to describing the individual should be available to those who are going to make or influence decisions affecting his future with the Agency. The total picture of an individual is not needed by, nor should it be the concern of, other individuals who are not participating in the decision-making process.

4. The use of a double system of folders is an attractive solution: establish one folder to be available to those implementing decisions and containing only personnel actions and routine administrative information, and a record folder to be available only to those making decisions and containing performance and other evaluations and other confidential information. The solution was suggested by the Senate Subcommittee on Investigation, which committee reviewed the maintenance of personnel files in the Department of State. The logistical problems of converting to and maintaining such a system are considerable. From a practical point of view,

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both files would still be handled by personnel supporting the decision-makers. Accordingly, we have abandoned this possibility as an effective solution to our problem.

5. Our efforts toward control have been directed to devising some compromise which would protect the confidential nature of file contents and still make it available to those who must use it:


a. The latest refinement of our charge-out control procedure tightens up reporting requirements as to who has a file and a suspense on its return within a reasonable time.

b. Sensitive documents are maintained apart from the regular folder, under the direct control of the Director of Personnel, and access to them is limited on a strict need-to-know basis. The previous procedure for attempting to maintain the confidential nature of these materials by keeping them in a sealed envelope within the regular file has been discontinued.

6. Our latest efforts, outlined above, are the best system we have been able to devise thus far short of such extreme measures as denying access to the files to those who properly should have them, requiring all users to present themselves at this office for the purpose of examining files, or providing individual escorts for each folder while out of our custody. We believe that time to educate our customers to these controls and to test their effectiveness should be permitted before more extreme measures are adopted with respect to the handling of Official Personnel Folders.

7. In connection with procedures for implementing the assignment and promotion policies recently approved by the DCI, we are giving priority attention to the possible use of a "Personnel Profile Sheet" wherever practicable in lieu of the folder. Regardless of this possibility, we feel that we should proceed as indicated above with respect to Official Personnel Folders since in all probability the profile sheet could not be substituted for the folder for all purposes.

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*for* **HARRISON G. Reynolds**  
Director of Personnel